

# ***My Free Catechism***

*Book Four: Prayer and Christian Perfection*

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*Nihil Obstat:*

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Given this 16<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2020 at the Chancery of the Diocese of Allentown.



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This catechism is intended as a supplementary learning material for children in the upper grades, but is substantial enough to be usable also by young adults and the general public. It also aims to serve as a free resource for many average Catholics who need to learn or review what the Catholic faith teaches, but who have no time nor endurance to read the voluminous and theologically precise *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

This catechism is divided into four books; namely, Book One: *The Apostle's Creed*, Book Two: *The Sacraments*, Book Three: *The Commandments*, and Book Four: *Prayer and Christian Perfection*. The books are available in the form of pdf files that may be copied, shared, printed on paper or uploaded to children's mobile devices, iPods or computer tablets.

I did not write this catechism from scratch. To save time I made use of the questions and answers from old catechisms in the public domain, particularly the *Catechism of St. Pius X*. However, I edited, expanded and updated many of the texts to reflect current Church teachings. Color texts and illustrations, which are missing in old catechisms, were added to make the book attractive to young readers.

Many of the pictures used here are also in the public domain here in the U.S., but there are a few copyrighted ones that I took the liberty of using based on the concept of "fair use," as defined by Title 17, U.S. Code §107, for educational and non-commercial purposes. Picture credits and a link to their sources and license (when available) are given at the end of the book.

External references in the texts, such as references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) or to the *1983 Code of Canon Law* (CIC), are added mainly for the use of parents or teachers who are coaching the children in learning this catechism. However, it is hoped that through the reading of select paragraphs of the CCC, many will be encouraged to read the entire book and profit from its wealth of wisdom.

Biblical texts used in this catechism are mostly from the *Douay-Challoner Rheims* version which, because they are in the public domain, I have edited slightly just to make the English less archaic for contemporary readers. The final texts may be compared with the original text of the *Douay-Challoner-Rheims* version (link below).

Although I made this book as a lay Dominican, this book is my personal project and not the project of the Lay Fraternities of St. Dominic. Therefore, the ideas expressed are mine alone and do not represent the endorsement or position of the Lay Fraternities of St. Dominic or the Order of Preachers as a whole.

## USEFUL LINKS

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC):

<http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/INDEX.HTM>

1983 Code of Canon Law (CIC – comes from the Latin title *Codex Iuris Canonici*)

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic\\_index\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html)

Anecdotes and Examples Illustrating the Catholic Catechism

<https://archive.org/details/AnecdotesAndExamplesIllustrating/page/n5/mode/2up>

Douay-Challoner-Rheims Bible (public domain)

<http://www.drbo.org/index.htm>



**Fig 4 Christ the Good Shepherd**  
Artist: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682)



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## PART 4 *PRAYER AND CHRISTIAN PERFECTION*

### CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

#### 1. What is treated of in the fourth part of this catechism?

The fourth part of this catechism (Book Four) treats of Christian perfection and the means of attaining it. Christian perfection consists in *union with God through grace*. This is chiefly attained by receiving the sacraments and observing the commandments of God and of the Church.

#### 2. Are there other means of attaining Christian perfection in addition to receiving the sacraments and observing the commandments?

Yes. The other means of attaining Christian perfection, in addition to receiving the sacraments and observing the commandments, consist in the performance of the following:

- (1) Acts of Prayer
  - Prayer in General
  - The “Our Father” (or the Lord’s Prayer)
  - The Hail Mary (or the Angelic Salutation)
- (2) Attendance at Holy Mass
- (3) The Practice of the Virtues
- (4) Observance of the Beatitudes
- (5) Works of Mercy and other Religious Practices
- (6) Observance of the Evangelical Counsels

## LESSON 1 PRAYER IN GENERAL

### 1. What is prayer?

Prayer is the raising of our minds and hearts to God to adore Him, to thank Him, to beg forgiveness for our sins, and to ask Him for what we need. (CCC 2559, 2562)

### 2. How is prayer divided?

Prayer is divided into *vocal*, *meditative*, and *contemplative* prayer. Vocal prayer is one that uses words accompanied by attention of mind and devotion of heart. Meditative prayer, or *meditation*, is one that engages mostly the powers of the mind, the imagination and reasoning, in communicating with God. Contemplative prayer is one that engages mostly the heart to establish a loving union with God. (CCC 2700-2724)

### 3. How else may prayer be divided?

Prayer may also be divided into *private* and *public* prayer. Private prayer is that which each one says individually for himself or for others. Public (or *communal*) prayer is that which is said together by the sacred ministers (pope, bishops, priests and deacons) in the name of the Church and by the faithful at large. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is an example of public prayer. Prayer that is said in common and publicly by the faithful, in processions, pilgrimages and in the church, is also public prayer. The Holy Rosary is commonly said individually, in which case it is a private prayer. But if it is prayed in common by several persons at home, in the church or in a procession, then it becomes a public prayer.

### 4. Do we have a well-founded hope of obtaining by means of prayer the helps and graces that we need?

Yes, our hope of obtaining from God the graces that we need is founded on the promises of the almighty, merciful and all-faithful God, and on the merits of Jesus Christ.





**Fig 4.1.1 The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is an Example of Public Prayer**

**5. In whose name should we ask of God the graces we stand in need of?**

We should ask of God the graces we stand in need of in the Name of Jesus Christ, as He Himself has taught us and as is done by the Church, which always ends her prayers with these words: “Through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**6. Why should we beg graces of God in the name of Jesus Christ?**

We should beg graces of God in the Name of Jesus Christ because He is our Mediator, and it is through Him alone that we can approach the throne of God.

**7. If prayer is so powerful how is it that many times our prayers are not heard?**

Our prayers are always answered, but often not in the way that we expect either because we ask for things that are not good for us, or because we do not ask properly. (CCC 2735-2737)

**8. Which are the chief things we should ask of God?**

The chief things we should ask of God are His own glory, our eternal salvation and the means of obtaining it. It is poor practice to be always asking God only for material favors, but neglect to pray for our spiritual needs.

**9. Is it not also lawful to ask of temporal goods?**

Yes, it is lawful to ask God for temporal goods, but always with the condition that these be in conformity with His holy will and not a hindrance to our salvation.

**10. If God knows all that is necessary for us, why should we pray?**

Although God knows all that is necessary for us, He still wills that we should pray to Him so as to acknowledge Him as the Giver of every good gift, to attest our humble submission to Him, and to merit His favors for ourselves.

**11. What dispositions are required in order to pray well?**

The first and best disposition to render our prayers efficacious is to be in the state of grace; or if we are not in that state, to desire to put ourselves in it. We should also pray with recollection, humility, confidence, perseverance and resignation.

**12. What is meant by praying with recollection?**

It means remembering that we are speaking to God. Hence we should pray with all respect and devotion, as far as possible avoiding distractions, that is, thoughts not related to our prayers.

**13. Do distractions lessen the merit of prayer?**

Yes, when due to our attachments we ourselves bring them about, or do not promptly drive them away. But if we do all we can to be attached only to God, then our distractions do not lessen the merit of our prayer, and may even increase it. (CCC 2729)

#### 14. What is required to pray with recollection?

Before prayer we should banish all occasions of distraction, and during prayer we should reflect that we are in God's presence.

#### 15. What is meant by praying with humility?

It means sincerely acknowledging our own unworthiness and powerlessness, as well as *observing a respectful posture*.



Poor Praying Posture



Good Praying Posture

Fig 4.1.2 Improper and Proper Praying Posture

Note: The girl on the left is only showing us an example of poor praying posture. The picture does not represent that this is the way she actually prays in real life.

#### 16. What is meant by praying with confidence?

It means that we should have a **firm hope** of being heard, if it is to God's glory and our own true welfare. It is not good to pray *doubting* God's generosity and goodness.

#### 17. What is meant by praying with perseverance?

It means that we should not grow tired of praying, if God does not at once hear us, but that we should ever continue to pray with increased fervor.

**18. What is meant by praying with resignation?**

It means that we should conform our will to the will of God, even when our prayers are apparently not heard, because He knows better than we do what is necessary for our eternal salvation.

**19. Does God always hear prayers when well said?**

Yes, God always hears prayers when well said, but He answers them in the way most conducive to our eternal salvation, and not always in the way we wish.

**20. What effects does prayer produce in us?**

Prayer makes us recognize our dependence on God, the Supreme Lord. It makes us advance in virtue. It strengthens us against temptation. It comforts us in tribulation. It aids us in our needs. And it obtains for us the grace of final perseverance.

**21. When should we especially pray?**

We should especially pray when in danger, in temptation, and at the hour of death. “Pray,” Christ said, “lest you enter into temptation” (Luke 22:40).

**22. How often should we pray?**

We should pray often, morning and night, and when beginning the more important actions of the day. St. Paul advised us: “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thes 5:17). (CCC 2742-2743)

**23. For whom should we pray?**

We should pray for all. But first, for ourselves, then for our parents, siblings, relatives, friends and enemies; for the conversion of sinners, and of those outside the true Church, and for the poor souls in purgatory. “Pray for one another,” says St. James, “for the continual prayer of a just man avails much” (Jas 5:16).

## LESSON 2 THE “OUR FATHER” (or the *Lord’s Prayer*)

### 1. Which is the most excellent of all vocal prayers?

The most excellent of all vocal prayers is that which Jesus Christ Himself taught us, that is to say, the *Our Father*.

### 2. Why is the *Our Father* the most excellent of all prayers?

Because (1) Jesus Christ Himself composed and taught it to us; (2) it contains clearly and in a few words all we can hope for from God; and (3) it is the standard and model of all other prayers.

### 3. Is the *Our Father* also the most efficacious of prayers?

Yes, it is also the most efficacious of prayers, because it is the most acceptable to God, since in it we pray in the very words His Divine Son has taught us.

### 4. Why is the *Our Father* called the Lord’s Prayer?

The *Our Father* is called the Lord’s Prayer, precisely because Jesus Christ our Lord has taught it to us with His own lips.

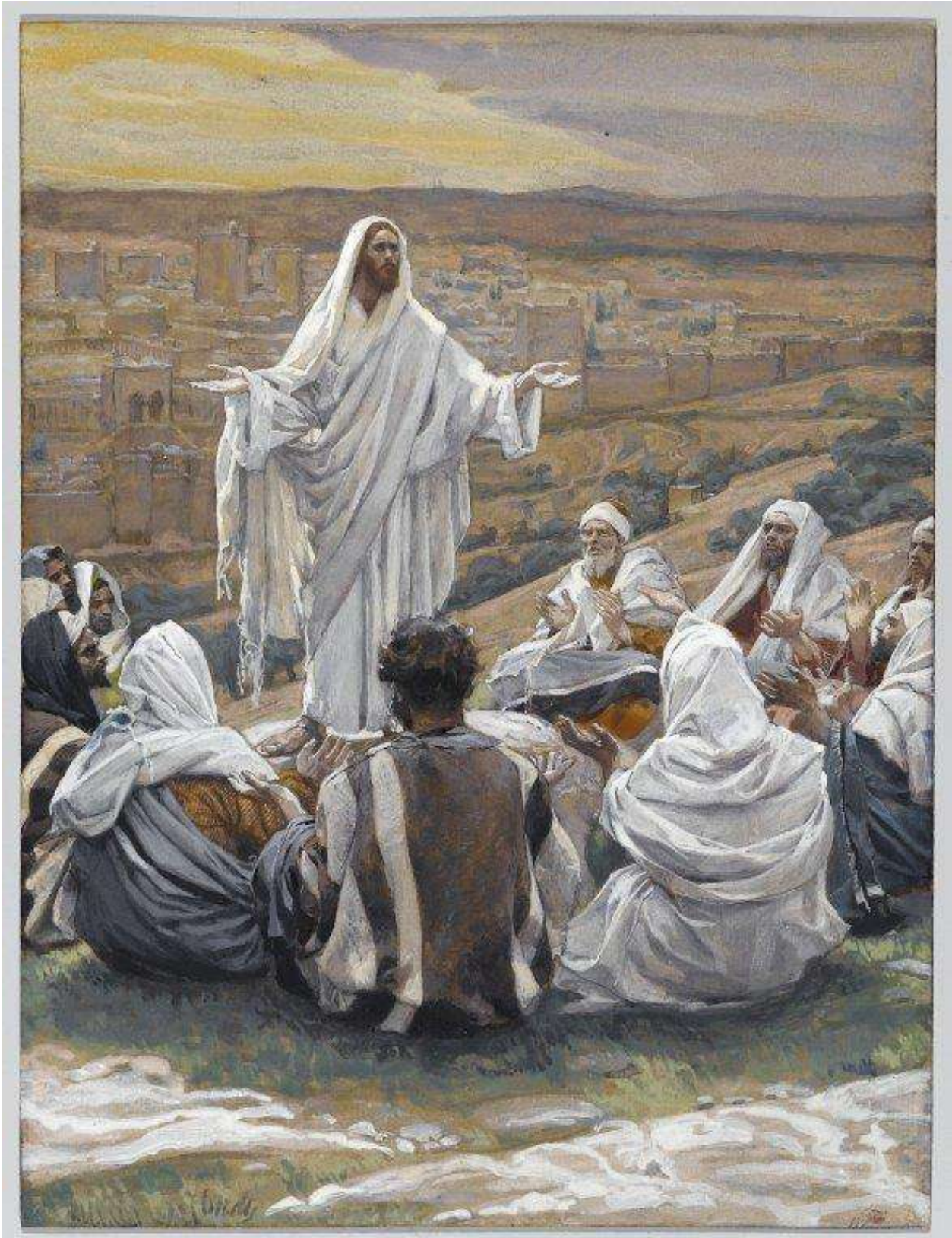
### 5. How many petitions are there in the *Our Father*?

In the *Our Father* there are seven petitions preceded by an introduction.

Our Father who art in Heaven = (Introduction)

- (1) Hallowed be Thy name;
- (2) Thy Kingdom come;
- (3) Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven;
- (4) Give us this day our daily bread;
- (5) And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
- (6) And lead us not into temptation;
- (7) But deliver us from evil. Amen.





**Fig 4.2.1 Christ Teaching the Apostles how to Pray the Our Father**



**6. When beginning the Lord’s Prayer, why do we call Him our Father?**

We begin the Lord’s Prayer by calling God our Father, to foster confidence in His infinite goodness by the remembrance that we are His *adopted* children. (CCC 2782)

**7. Is Heaven a place? Why do we say, “Who art in Heaven”?**

Heaven is not a place in space because it is not material. Heaven is where God exists in His glory. We say, “Our Father who art in Heaven,” to raise our hearts to Heaven, that is, to where God manifests His presence and His glory in us. (CCC 2802)

**8. For what do we pray when we say, “Hallowed be Thy name”?**

In the first petition, “Hallowed be Thy name,” we ask our Father that His name – first revealed to Moses and then in Jesus – may be sanctified, and that He be known, loved, honored and served by the whole world and by ourselves in particular. (CCC 2810-2813)

**9. For what do we pray when we say, “Thy Kingdom come”?**

In the second petition, “Thy Kingdom come,” we ask the Father to reign in us by His *sanctifying grace*, by which He dwells in our souls as a King in His palace. But most of all, we hope by this prayer for His return, and look forward to His second coming as King of our Heavenly Kingdom. (CCC 2818)

**10. For what do we pray when we say, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven”?**

In the third petition, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,” we beg the grace to do the will of God in all things by obeying His commandments and following His inspirations as promptly as the angels and saints obey Him in Heaven. We also beg the grace to accept the will of God in good times and bad, so that His plan of salvation may be fulfilled in our life and in the world. (CCC 2825-2826)

### **11. For what do we pray when we say, “Give us this day our daily bread”?**

In the fourth petition, “Give us this day our daily bread,” we beg of God all that is daily necessary for soul and body.

*For our soul* we ask of God the sustenance of our spiritual life, that is, we pray the Lord to give us His Body (in the Eucharist) of which we stand in continual need. *For our body* we ask all that is necessary for the support of our temporal life. (CCC 2835-2836)

We add the word “daily” because we ask only for what is necessary to life, and not an abundance of food and other goods of the earth. It also signifies that we are not too solicitous regarding the future, but that we only ask what we need at present.

### **12. For what do we pray when we say, “And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us”?**

In the fifth petition, “And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” we ask God’s mercy to pardon us our sins as we pardon those who offend us. Recall the “Parable of the Unforgiving Servant” in Matt 18:23-35. (CCC 2841-2844)

### **13. For what do we pray when we say, “And lead us not into temptation”?**

In the sixth petition, “And lead us not into temptation,” we ask God to deliver us from temptation either by not allowing us to be tempted, or by giving us grace not to be overcome by the temptation. We also ask for the Spirit of discernment, that we may distinguish between good and evil, and the grace of vigilance and final perseverance. (CCC 2846-2849)

Temptations are an incitement to sin that comes from the devil, or from the wicked, or from our own evil passions. It is not a sin to have temptations. However, it is a sin to consent to them, or to voluntarily expose oneself to the danger of consenting to them.

God sometimes allows us to be tempted so as to test our fidelity, increase our virtue, and augment our merits. To avoid temptation we should avoid dangerous companions, dangerous drinks, games, movies and TV shows, and we should pray often and receive the sacraments frequently (especially the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist).

#### **14. For what do we pray when we say, “But deliver us from evil, Amen”?**

In the seventh petition, “But deliver us from evil,” we ask God to show forth our victory over Satan, by freeing us from past, present and future evil, and from the greatest of all evils which is sin, and from eternal damnation, which is its penalty. (CCC 2850-2854)

We say, “Deliver us from evil,” and not, from *all evils*, because we should not pray to be exempt from all the evils of this life, but only from those which are not good for our souls. Therefore, we beg liberation from evil in general, that is, from whatever God sees would be bad for us.

It is lawful to beg liberation from some particular evil, such as sickness, poverty, etc., *but always in submission to the will of God*, who may sometimes ordain that particular affliction for the good of our soul. Such evils sometimes help us to do penance for our sins, to practice virtue (especially patience), and above all to imitate Jesus Christ in our sufferings, so as to have a greater share in His glory.

To obtain the graces asked in the *Our Father* we must recite it without haste and with attention. We should say the *Our Father* every day and often, because every day we need God’s help.

The “Amen” at the end of the *Our Father* means “So be it” or “Thus do I pray.” (CCC 2856)

## LESSON 3 THE “HAIL MARY” (or the *Angelic Salutation*)

### 1. What prayer do we usually pray after the Our Father?

After the *Our Father* we usually say the *Angelic Salutation*, that is, the “Hail Mary,” through which we have recourse to the Blessed Virgin.

### 2. Why is the “Hail Mary” called the *Angelic Salutation*?

The Hail Mary is called the *Angelic Salutation*, because it begins with the salutation addressed by the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary.



**Fig 4.3.1 The Angel Gabriel Appeared to Mary (The Annunciation)**

And the angel said to her: “*Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.*” (Luke 1:28).

**3. Whose words are those of the “Hail Mary”?**

The words of the Hail Mary are partly the angel Gabriel’s, partly St. Elizabeth’s, and partly the Church’s.

**4. Which are the words of the angel Gabriel?**

The words of the angel Gabriel are the beginning words: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.” (Luke 1:28)

**5. When was it that the angel said these words to Mary?**

The angel said these words to Mary when he went to announce to her, by command of Almighty God, that God the Son would become man, and that she was to be His mother. (CCC 2676)

**6. Why do we greet the Blessed Virgin with the very words of the angel?**

In greeting the Blessed Virgin with the words of the angel we congratulate her by recalling to mind the singular privileges and gifts which God granted her in preference to all other creatures.

**7. Which are the words of St. Elizabeth?**

The words of St. Elizabeth are these: “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb” (Luke 1:42)

**8. When was it that St. Elizabeth said these words?**

Inspired by God, St. Elizabeth said these words when, three months before she gave birth to St. John the Baptist, she was visited by the Blessed Virgin, who already had the Baby Jesus also in her womb.

**9. What do we intend by saying these words?**

In saying the words of St. Elizabeth we congratulate the Blessed Virgin on her high dignity as Mother of God, and we bless God and thank Him for having given us Jesus Christ through Mary.





**Fig 4.3.2 Mary Visited her Cousin Elizabeth (The Visitation)**

“And she (Elizabeth) cried out with a loud voice, and said: *Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb...* For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy” (Luke 1:42, 44)

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**10. Whose words are the remaining words of the “Hail Mary”?**

The remaining words, which begin with “Holy Mary, Mother of God, ...” have been added and used by the Church since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but it became official during the time of Pope St. Pius V (year 1568).

**11. What do we ask for in the second half of the prayer which starts with “Holy Mary, Mother of God ...”?**

In the second half of the Hail Mary we beg the Blessed Virgin to protect us by her prayers during this life and especially at the hour of death, when we shall have greater need of it. (CCC 2677)

**12. Why do we say the “Hail Mary” rather than any other prayer after the “Our Father”?**

Because the Blessed Virgin is our most powerful advocate with Jesus Christ, and hence, after having said the prayer taught us by Jesus Christ, we pray the Blessed Virgin to obtain for us the graces we have asked therein.

**13. Why is the Blessed Virgin so powerful?**

The Blessed Virgin is so powerful, because, being the Mother of God, she cannot but be heard by Him. As a good Son Christ listens to His mother.

**14. What do the saints teach us on devotion to Mary?**

Regarding devotion to Mary the saints teach us that those who are truly devoted to her are loved and protected by her with a most tender mother’s love, and that with her help they are sure to find Jesus and obtain salvation.

**15. What form of devotion to Mary does the Church recommend in a very special manner?**

The devotion to the Blessed Virgin which the Church especially recommends is the Holy Rosary.

## LESSON 4 ATTENDANCE AT HOLY MASS

### THE ESSENCE OF THE MASS

**1. Should the Holy Eucharist be considered only as a sacrament?**

The Holy Eucharist, besides being a sacrament, is also the permanent Sacrifice of the New Law, which Jesus Christ left to His Church to be offered to God by the hands of His priests.

**2. What in general does a sacrifice consist in?**

In general, a sacrifice consists in the offering of some sensible thing to God and in some way destroying it as an acknowledgment of His supreme dominion over us and over all things.

**3. What is this sacrifice of the New Law called?**

It is called the Holy Mass.

**4. What, then, is the Holy Mass?**

The Holy Mass is the sacrifice of the Eucharist, that is, of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ offered in an unbloody manner on our altars under the appearances of bread and wine, *as thanksgiving and praise to the Father, and as a memorial of Christ and of His Mystical Body, the Church.* (CCC 1359-1372)

**5. Is the sacrifice of the Eucharist the same as that of the cross?**

The sacrifice of the Eucharist is substantially the same as that of the cross, for the same Jesus Christ, who offered Himself on the cross, is He who offers Himself by the hands of the priests. In addition, since the Church, as the Mystical Body of Christ, unites with Christ's offering, the sacrifice of the Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church. (CCC 1366-1368)

## 6. What difference and relation then is there between the Mass and the sacrifice of the cross?

Between the Mass and the sacrifice of the cross there is this difference and relation, that on the cross Jesus Christ offered Himself by shedding His blood and meriting for us; whereas on our altars His same sacrifice on the cross becomes present to us, so that we, without seeing the shedding of His blood, are able to join ourselves to it, and thereby receive the fruits of His passion and death.



Fig 4.4.1 Priest Celebrating Holy Mass

## 7. What other relation has the Mass to the sacrifice of the cross?

Another relation of the Mass to the sacrifice of the cross is, that the Mass makes present in a sensible way the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross, because, in virtue of the words of consecration, only the Body of our Savior is made present under the species of the bread and only His Blood under the species of the wine; although by natural concomitance the living and real Jesus Christ is present under each of the species.

## 8. Is not the sacrifice of the cross the one only sacrifice of the New Law?

The sacrifice of the cross is the one only sacrifice of the New Law, inasmuch as through it Our Lord satisfied Divine Justice, acquired all the merits necessary to save us, and thus, on His part, fully accomplished our redemption. However, He applies these merits to us through the means instituted by Him in His Church, among which is the Mass, the sacrifice of the Eucharist.

## 9. For what ends then is the sacrifice of the Eucharist offered?

The sacrifice of the Eucharist is offered to God for four ends: (1) To honor Him properly; (2) *To thank Him* for His favors (Note: “eucharist” means thanksgiving); (3) To appease Him and make due satisfaction for our sins, and to help the souls in purgatory; and (4) To obtain all the graces necessary for us. (CCC 1360)

## 10. Who is it that offers to God the sacrifice of the Eucharist?

The principal Offeror of the sacrifice of the Eucharist is Jesus Christ, while the priest is the minister who *in the person of Jesus Christ* offers the same sacrifice to the Eternal Father. (CCC 1348)

## 11. Who instituted the sacrifice of the Eucharist?

Jesus Christ instituted the sacrifice of the Eucharist when He instituted the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist during His last supper with the Apostles, and said that this should be done in memory of His passion. (CCC 1341)

## 12. To whom is the Holy Mass offered?

The Holy Mass is offered to God alone, but it may be celebrated in honor of the Blessed Virgin and the saints.

## 13. Who shares in the fruits of the Mass?

The entire Church shares in the fruits of the Mass, but more particularly the priest, those who assist at Mass, and those for whom the Mass is offered, both living and dead. (CCC 1371)

## 14. What is the Order of the Mass?

The Order of the Mass is as follows (CCC 1348-1355):

### Introductory Rites

- Entrance
- Greeting
- Penitential Act (“I confess to Almighty God...”)
- Glory to God in the highest– omitted during Advent and Lent.
- Collect

### Liturgy of the Word

- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Second Reading –on Sundays and solemnities.
- Gospel Acclamation
- Gospel Reading
- Homily
- Profession of Faith (“I believe in God ...”) – on Sundays, solemnities, and special occasions
- Universal Prayer

### Liturgy of the Eucharist

- Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar
- Prayer over the Offerings
- Eucharistic Prayer
  - Preface
  - Holy, Holy, Holy
  - First half of prayer, including Consecration
  - Mystery of Faith
  - Second half of prayer
- The Lord's Prayer (The “Our Father”)
- Sign of Peace
- Lamb of God
- Communion
- Prayer after Communion

### Concluding Rites

- Optional announcements
- Greeting and Blessing
- Dismissal

Pay attention to this order when attending Mass!!!

## THE WAY TO ASSIST AT MASS

### 15. What is required in order to assist at Holy Mass well and profitably?

To assist at Holy Mass well and profitably two things are necessary: (1) Modesty of person and (2) Devotion of heart.

**Modesty of person** consists especially in being modestly dressed, in maintaining silence and recollection and, observing proper posture (kneeling, standing, sitting) at appropriate times during the Mass. (CCC 1387)

**True devotion** is best practiced by doing the following: (1) From the very beginning to unite our intention with that of the priest, offering the Holy Eucharist to God for the ends for which it was instituted. (2) To accompany the priest in each prayer and action of the Mass. (3) To meditate on the passion and death of Jesus Christ and to heartily detest our sins, which have been the cause of them. (4) To go to Communion, or at least to make an Act of Spiritual Communion when one is unable to receive the Eucharist sacramentally. (CCC 1388)

### 16. How do you say the Act of Spiritual Communion?

*“My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.”*

Note: Acts of Adoration and Thanksgiving should also be said after the Spiritual Communion just as if one received Holy Communion sacramentally.



## LESSON 5 THE PRACTICE OF THE VIRTUES

### VIRTUES AND VICES IN GENERAL

#### 1. What is a supernatural virtue?

A supernatural virtue is a quality infused by God into the soul by which the soul acquires inclination, facility, and promptness to know good and do it toward eternal life. Virtue is a good habit or disposition of the soul, and is called “supernatural” if it is infused by God and proceeds from a supernatural motive, such as the glory of God.

#### 2. How many principal virtues are there?

The principal virtues are seven: three theological virtues (faith, hope and charity), and four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance). The three theological virtues are supernatural virtues; the four cardinal virtues are natural virtues. These will all be treated in the next sections of this Lesson.

#### 3. What is a vice?

A vice is the opposite of virtue. It is a bad habit or evil disposition of the soul to shirk good and do evil, arising from the frequent repetition of evil acts.

#### 4. What difference is there between a sin and a vice?

Between sin and vice there is this difference that sin is a passing act, whereas vice is a bad habit, contracted by continually falling into some sin.

#### 5. Are there different kinds of vice?

There are seven capital vices: Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy and Sloth. These vices will be treated in another section after the virtues.

## THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

### 6. What are the theological virtues?

The theological virtues are: Faith, Hope and Charity.

### 7. Why are Faith, Hope and Charity called theological virtues?

Faith, Hope and Charity are called theological virtues, because they have God as their immediate and principal object, and are *infused* by Him. “Infused” means that they are not acquired by our personal efforts, but come directly from Him.

### 8. How can the theological virtues have God for their immediate object?

The theological virtues have God for their immediate object, in this way that by Faith we believe in God, and believe all He has revealed; by Hope, we hope to possess Him; and by Charity, we love God and in Him we love our neighbor and ourselves.

### 9. When does God infuse the theological virtues into the soul?

God in His goodness infuses the theological virtues into the soul when He gives us His sanctifying grace. Hence when receiving Baptism, we were enriched with these virtues and, along with them, with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

### 10. Is it enough toward salvation, to have received the theological virtues in Baptism?

For one who has come to the use of reason, it is not enough to have received the infused, theological virtues in Baptism. It is also necessary to make frequent acts of Faith, Hope and Charity.

### 11. When are we obliged to make acts of Faith, Hope and Charity?

We are obliged to make acts of Faith, Hope and Charity, when we come to the use of reason; often during life; and when in danger of death.



**Fig 4.5.1 Painting of Faith, Hope and Charity**

## FAITH

### 12. What is Faith?

Faith is a supernatural virtue, which God infuses into our souls, and by which, relying on the authority of God Himself, we believe everything which He has revealed and which through His Church He proposes for our belief.

### 13. How do we know the truths God has revealed?

We know the revealed truths by means of the Church, which is infallible in teaching these truths; that is, by means of the pope, the successor of St. Peter, and by means of the bishops, the successors to the Apostles, who were taught by Jesus Christ Himself.

### 14. Are we certain of the truths the Church teaches us?

We are most certain of the truths the Church teaches, because Jesus Christ promised that He would send the Holy Spirit. “He, the Holy Spirit ... will teach you all things” (John 14:26).

### 15. By what sin is the Faith lost?

Faith is lost by denying or voluntarily doubting even a single article proposed for our belief.

### 16. How is lost Faith recovered

Lost Faith is recovered by repenting of the sin committed and by believing anew all that the Church believes.

### 17. Can we comprehend all the truths of Faith?

No, we cannot comprehend all the truths of Faith, because some of these truths are mysteries.

### 18. What are mysteries?

Mysteries are truths above reason and which we are to believe even though we cannot comprehend them.

**19. Why must we believe mysteries?**

We must believe mysteries because they are revealed to us by God, who, being infinite Truth and Goodness, can neither deceive nor be deceived.

**20. Are mysteries contrary to reason?**

Mysteries are above reason, but not contrary to reason; and even reason itself persuades us to accept the mysteries.

**21. Why cannot the mysteries be contrary to reason?**

The mysteries cannot be contrary to reason, because the same God who has given us the light of reason has also revealed the mysteries, and He cannot contradict Himself.

## HOPE

**22. What is Hope?**

Hope is a supernatural virtue, infused by God into the soul, by which we desire and expect that eternal life that God has promised to His servants, as well as the means necessary to attain it.

**23. What grounds have we to hope that God will give us Heaven and the means necessary to secure it?**

We hope that God will give us Heaven and the necessary means to attain it, because the all-merciful God, through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, has promised it to those who faithfully serve Him; and, being both faithful and omnipotent, He never fails in His promises.

**24. What are the conditions necessary to obtain Heaven?**

The conditions necessary to obtain Heaven are the grace of God, the practice of good works, and perseverance until death in His holy love.



**25. How is Hope lost?**

Hope is lost as often as Faith is lost; and it is also lost by the sins of despair and presumption.

**26. How is lost Hope regained?**

Lost Hope is regained by repenting of the sin committed, and by exciting anew confidence in the divine goodness.

## CHARITY

**27. What is Charity?**

Charity is a supernatural virtue, infused into our soul by God, by which we love God above all for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

**28. Why should we love God?**

We should love God because He is the Supreme Good, infinitely good and perfect; and also, because He commands us to do so, and because of the many benefits we receive from Him.

**29. How are we to love God?**

We are to love God above all things else, with our whole heart, with our whole mind, with our whole soul, and with all our strength.

**30. What is meant by loving God above all other things?**

To love God above all other things means to prefer Him to all creatures, even the dearest and most perfect, and to be willing to lose everything rather than offend Him or cease to love Him.

**31. What is meant by loving God with our whole heart?**

To love God with our whole heart means consecrating all our affections to Him.



**32. What is meant by loving God with our whole mind?**

To love God with our whole mind means directing all our thoughts to Him.

**33. What is meant by loving God with our whole soul?**

To love God with our whole soul means consecrating to Him the use of all the powers of our soul.

**34. What is meant by loving God with all our strength?**

To love God with all our strength means striving to grow ever more and more in His love, and so to act that all our actions should have as their one motive and end the love of Him and the desire of pleasing Him.

**35. Why should we love our neighbor?**

We should love our neighbor for the love of God, because God commands it, and because every man is made to God's image.

**36. Are we obliged to love even our enemies?**

We are obliged to love even our enemies, because they are our neighbors also and because Jesus Christ has made this love the object of an express command.

**37. What is meant by loving our neighbor as ourselves?**

To love our neighbor as ourselves means to wish him and do him, as far as possible, the good which we ought to wish for ourselves, and not to wish or to do him any evil.

**38. When do we love ourselves as we ought?**

We love ourselves as we ought when we endeavor to serve God and to place all our happiness in Him.

**39. How is charity lost?**

Charity is lost by mortal sin, but it is regained by making acts of love for God, by duly repenting and making a good confession.

## THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

### 40. Are there other virtues besides the theological virtues?

Yes, and they are called *moral* virtues. Unlike theological virtues which are infused by God, moral virtues are acquired by practice. The theological virtues perfect our faculties to attain God supernaturally, but the moral virtues perfect our will, our appetites and our exterior actions. The chief moral virtues are Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance, and are called *cardinal* virtues.

### 41. Why are Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance called Cardinal virtues?

Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance are called cardinal virtues because all the other moral virtues are founded upon, and hinged around them. In Latin, *cardo* means hinge.

### 42. What is Prudence?

Prudence is the virtue that directs each action towards its lawful end and consequently seeks the proper means in order that the action be well accomplished in all points of view and thereby pleasing to Our Lord.

### 43. What is Justice?

Justice is the virtue which disposes us to give everyone what belongs to him.

### 44. What is Fortitude?

Fortitude is the virtue which renders us courageous to the point of not fearing danger, not even death, for the service of God.

### 45. What is temperance?

Temperance disposes us to control the inordinate desires that please the senses and makes us use temporal goods with moderation.

## OTHER MORAL VIRTUES

### 46. Which are some of the other moral virtues in addition to the cardinal virtues?

Some of the other moral virtues are filial piety, patriotism, obedience, veracity, patience, and most importantly, religion.

Filial piety disposes us to honor and love our parents; patriotism disposes us to honor and love our country; obedience disposes us to do the will of our superiors; veracity (or truthfulness) disposes us to tell the truth; patience disposes us to bear trials and difficulties; and the virtue of religion – the highest of the moral virtues – disposes us to give God the worship that is due Him.

There are other moral virtues not listed above, such as those that are opposed to the capital vices. See below.

## THE CAPITAL VICICES

### 47. Which are the capital vices?

The vices called capital are seven: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth.

Pride – is the inordinate desire of our own excellence or esteem.

Covetousness – is an inordinate desire of riches.

Lust – is an inordinate desire of the pleasures of the flesh.

Anger – is an inordinate desire of revenge.

Gluttony – is an inordinate desire of food or drink.

Envy – is the sadness at another’s good, thinking that it reduces our own excellence.

Sloth – is the laziness of mind and heart to pursue good things.

#### 48. Why are these vices called capital?

They are called capital because they are the head and fount of many other vices and sins. For example,

Pride – leads to vain-glory, boasting, hypocrisy, ambition, arrogance, contempt of others, etc.

Covetousness – leads to usury, fraud, theft, hoarding, etc.

Lust – leads to fornication, adultery, immodest looks, touches, thoughts and desires, etc.

Anger – leads to hatred, threats, cursing, murder, etc.

Gluttony – leads to drunkenness, loss of self-control, violence, etc.

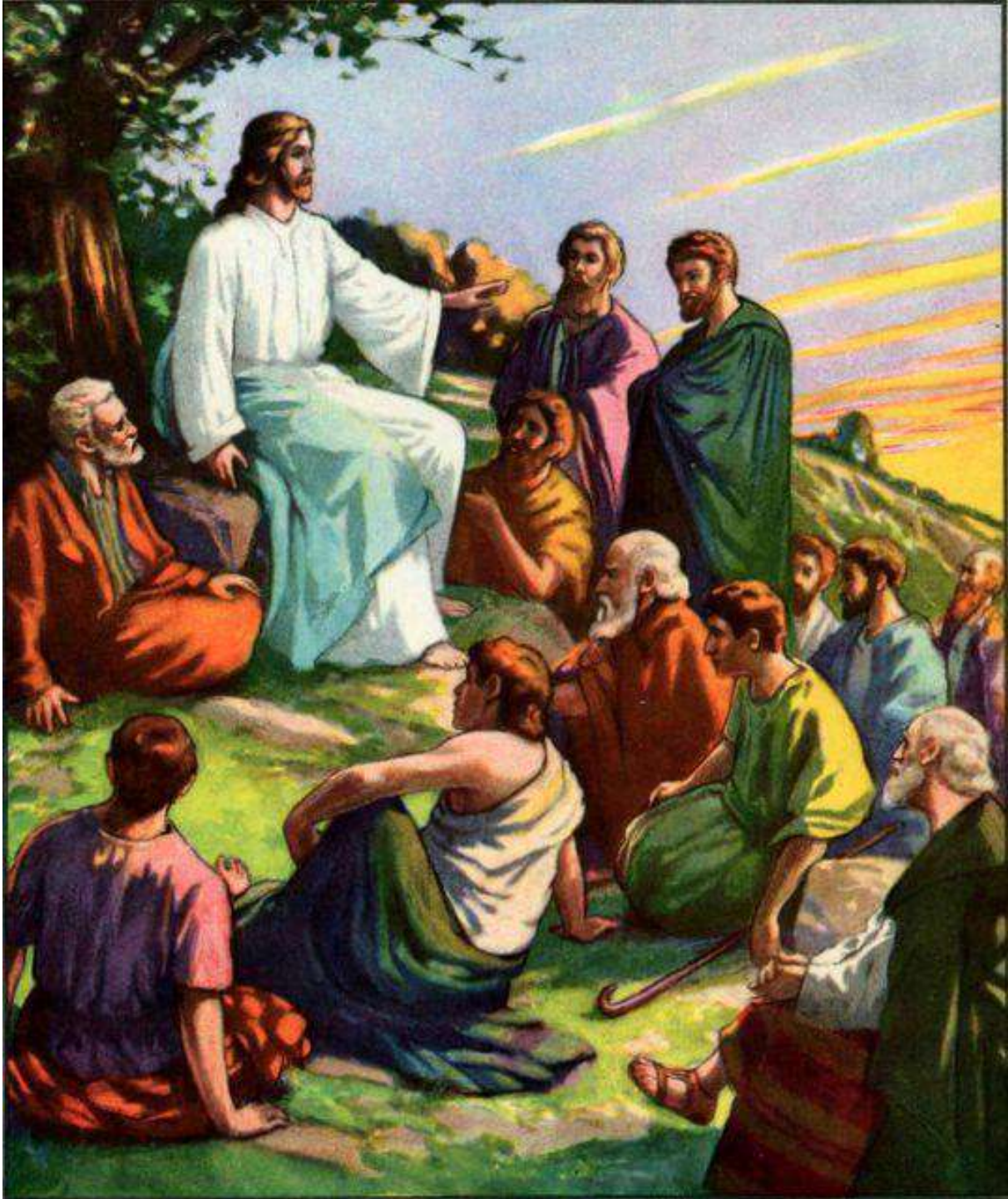
Envy – leads to detraction, back-biting, rash judgment, etc.

Sloth – leads to negligence, lack of devotion, aversion from God, etc.

#### 49. What moral virtues are opposed to the capital vices?

The moral virtues opposed to the capital vices are *humility* (the opposite of pride), *liberality* (the opposite of covetousness), *chastity* (the opposite of lust), *meekness* (the opposite of anger), *temperance* (the opposite of gluttony), *brotherly love* (the opposite of envy), and *diligence* or *zeal* (the opposite of sloth). Ordinarily one overcomes the capital vices through the practice of their opposite virtues.

## LESSON 6 OBSERVANCE OF THE BEATITUDES



**Fig 4.6.1 Jesus Giving the Eight Beatitudes**



## 1. Did Christ propose anything more besides the practice of the virtues?

Yes, he recommended the observance of the Beatitudes (from the Latin *beatitudo*, which means happiness or blessedness). The Beatitudes are the qualities that describe those who possess happiness in this life and in the life to come. By striving to have these qualities, we can hope to be happy in this life and in the next.

## 2. What are the Beatitudes?

The Beatitudes are the following (Matt 5:1-10):

1. Blessed (or happy) are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
2. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.
3. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.
4. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.
5. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
6. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.
7. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called children of God.
8. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

## 3. Why did Jesus Christ propose the Beatitudes to us?

Jesus Christ proposed the Beatitudes to us to make us detest the maxims of the world, and to invite us to love and practice the maxims of the Gospel.

## 4. Who are they whom the world calls happy?

The world calls those happy who abound in riches and honors, who lead a pleasant life, and who meet with no occasions of suffering.

**5. Who are the poor in spirit whom Jesus Christ calls happy?**

The poor in spirit are, according to the Gospel, those whose hearts are detached from riches; who make good use of riches should they have any; who do not seek them too eagerly, if they have none; and who suffer the loss of such things with resignation when deprived of them.

**6. Who are the meek?**

The meek are those who act tenderly toward their neighbor, bear patiently with his defects, and accept the offences and injuries they receive from him without contention, resentment, or vengeance.

**7. Who are they that mourn, yet are called happy?**

They that mourn, yet are called happy, are they who suffer tribulations with resignation, and who mourn over sins committed, over the evils and scandals that prevail in the world, over Paradise because it is so distant, and over the danger there is of losing it.

**8. Who are they that hunger and thirst after justice?**

They that hunger and thirst after justice, are those who ardently desire to increase daily more and more in divine grace and in the exercise of good and virtuous works.

**9. Who are the merciful?**

The merciful are those who love their neighbor in God and for God's sake, compassionate his miseries, spiritual as well as corporal, and endeavor to succor him according to their means and position.

**10. Who are the clean of heart?**

The clean of heart are those who retain no affection for sin and keep aloof from it, and who above all else avoid every sort of immodesty and impurity.

**11. Who are the peace-makers?**

The peace-makers are those who preserve peace with their neighbor and with themselves, and who endeavor to bring about peace and concord between those who are at variance.

**12. Who are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake?**

They, who suffer persecution for justice' sake, are those who patiently bear derision, reproof, and persecution for the sake of the Faith and of the law of Jesus Christ.

**13. What do the various rewards promised by Jesus Christ in the Beatitudes denote?**

The various rewards promised by Jesus Christ in the Beatitudes all denote under different names the eternal glory of Paradise.

**14. Do the Beatitudes procure us only the glory of Paradise?**

The Beatitudes not only procure us the glory of Paradise, but are also the means of leading a happy life, as far as this is possible here on earth.

**15. Can those who follow the maxims of the world be called truly happy?**

No, because they have no true peace of soul, and are in danger of being lost eternally.

## LESSON 7 THE WORKS OF MERCY AND OTHER RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

### 1. Besides attending Mass and receiving the sacraments, what else can we do to increase sanctifying grace and gain actual graces?

We can also increase sanctifying grace and gain actual graces:

- a) By prayer.
- b) By good works.
- c) By other religious practices.

### 2. What is prayer?

Prayer is speaking lovingly to God. This subject has already been discussed in previous lessons.

### 3. What is a good work?

A good work is anything we do for the love of God, such as the works of mercy.

### 4. What are the works of mercy?

There are two kinds: *corporal* and *spiritual* works of mercy. The corporal works of mercy are those that relieve the material needs of our neighbor. The spiritual works of mercy are those that relieve the spiritual needs of our neighbor.

### 5. What are the corporal works of mercy?

The corporal works of mercy are these seven:

1. To feed the hungry.
2. To give drink to the thirsty.
3. To clothe the naked.
4. To visit the imprisoned.
5. To shelter the homeless.
6. To visit the sick.
7. To bury the dead.



**Fig 4.7.1 St. Francesca Romana Feeding the Hungry**

## **6. What are the spiritual works of mercy?**

The spiritual works of mercy are these seven:

1. To admonish the sinner.
2. To teach the ignorant.
3. To counsel the doubtful.
4. To comfort the sorrowful.
5. To bear wrongs patiently.
6. To forgive all injuries.
7. To pray for the living and the dead.



## 7. Besides ordinary prayers and the works of mercy what other practices may be observed to increase grace?

Besides ordinary prayers and the works of mercy there are special religious *devotions* that may be practiced to increase grace.

Devotions are **not** obligations, but are recommended to increase grace and enhance our spiritual life. Examples of these special devotions are the following:

1. The recitation of the Holy Rosary.
2. Visits to the Blessed Sacrament.
3. The Way of the Cross.
4. Novenas.
5. Retreats.
6. Processions.

## 8. What are novenas?

*Novenas* are devotions carried on for a period of *nine* days in order to honor God, the angels or the saints, or to ask for special graces or favors. Novenas may be done privately at home, or publicly in the church.

## 9. What are retreats?

*Retreats* are a series of spiritual exercises, attended by a group of priests, nuns, or lay people, carried on to retreat or step back from the activities of day-to-day life, in order to find time for reflection and union with God. Retreats are usually held in schools, churches or retreat houses.

## 10. What are processions?

*Processions* are *public* forms of worship usually held to celebrate important events in the life of Christ, to commemorate particular doctrines of our faith, to make reparation for sins committed, to offer thanksgiving, or to ask for special favors. In a procession the faithful, usually carrying candles, walk in an orderly manner while saying prayers or chanting songs. Images (on vehicles or hand-carried) often join the procession and terminate in the church.

## LESSON 8 THE OBSERVANCE OF THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS

### 1. What particular means has Jesus Christ recommended for attaining Christian perfection?

For attaining Christian perfection Jesus Christ recommended the practice of the *evangelical counsels*; namely, voluntary poverty, perpetual chastity, and perfect obedience. (CCC 915)

*Voluntary poverty* is the renunciation of all material possessions for the love of God. *Perpetual chastity* is the renunciation of the right to marry, or the choice to remain a virgin for life. *Perfect obedience* is the complete subjection of one's will to that of a superior.

### 2. Why are they called evangelical counsels?

They are called “evangelical” because they are found in the Gospels. They are called “counsels” because they are an *invitation*, not a *command*. In other words, everyone is invited to observe them, but not everyone is obliged to keep them. God understands that not all can keep the evangelical counsels.

### 3. Then who is required to observe the evangelical counsels?

Only those who have bound themselves by vow to keep them, such as those in the *religious state* – the nuns, the sisters, and the brothers in various religious orders. (CCC 1618)

### 4. What is the religious state?

The religious state is a permanent way of life by which the faithful, as members of a community or as individuals, bind themselves to observe the evangelical counsels by vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

## 5. How do people in the religious state live a community life?

People who choose the religious state leave their families and live together with other religious in a convent, a monastery or a priory.



Fig 4.8.1 Dominican Sisters of Mary (Ann Arbor)

## 6. Can people who live in the world also attain Christian perfection?

Yes, if they live not according to the spirit of the world, but according to the spirit of Jesus Christ. In fact, most people in the world strive for Christian perfection simply by observing the commandments and practicing their faith. However, there are a few who, without actually entering the religious state, choose to become *lay members* of a particular, religious order. Instead of making solemn vows, lay members make a serious *promise* (which does not bind under pain of sin) to live their life in accordance with the spirituality of the Order with which they choose to associate.

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### Fig 4 Christ the Good Shepherd

Artist: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bartolomé\\_Esteban\\_Perez\\_Murillo\\_-\\_Christ\\_the\\_Good\\_Shepherd\\_-\\_WGA16374.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bartolomé_Esteban_Perez_Murillo_-_Christ_the_Good_Shepherd_-_WGA16374.jpg)

### Fig 4.1.1 The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is an Example of Public Prayer

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### Fig 4.1.2 Improper and Proper Praying Posture

Poor Praying Posture. Free photo by *Kateřina Hartlová* from *Pixabay.com*

<https://pixabay.com/photos/girl-childhood-teddy-bear-4485720/>

Good Praying Posture: <https://www.christiansupplies.co.nz/product/PR028/print-two-children-praying/> (The store site has a Pinterest button, indicating that its product ad image may be shared for non-commercial use.)

### Fig 4.2.1 Christ Teaching the Apostles how to Pray the Our Father

A watercolor painting by James Tissot (1836-1902)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brooklyn\\_Museum\\_-\\_The\\_Lord%27s\\_Prayer\\_\(Le\\_Pater\\_Noster\)\\_-\\_James\\_Tissot.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brooklyn_Museum_-_The_Lord%27s_Prayer_(Le_Pater_Noster)_-_James_Tissot.jpg)

### Fig 4.3.1 The Angel Gabriel Appeared to Mary (The Annunciation)

Artist: Philippe de Champaigne (1602-1674)

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/438724>

### Fig 4.3.2 Mary Visited her Cousin Elizabeth (The Visitation)

Artist: Miguel Cabrera (1695-1768)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:La\\_Visitaci3n\\_-\\_Miguel\\_Cabrera.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:La_Visitaci3n_-_Miguel_Cabrera.jpg)

### Fig 4.4.1 Priest Celebrating Holy Mass

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US\\_Navy\\_031006-N-9742R-002\\_Lt.\\_Cmdr.\\_Allen\\_R.\\_Kuss,\\_the\\_Roman\\_Catholic\\_priest\\_ aboard\\_USS\\_Enterprise\\_\(CVN\\_65\)\\_administers\\_the\\_Sunday\\_evening\\_Catholic\\_Mass\\_service.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US_Navy_031006-N-9742R-002_Lt._Cmdr._Allen_R._Kuss,_the_Roman_Catholic_priest_ aboard_USS_Enterprise_(CVN_65)_administers_the_Sunday_evening_Catholic_Mass_service.jpg)

### Fig 4.5.1 Painting of Faith, Hope and Charity

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

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**Fig 4.6.1 Jesus Giving the Eight Beatitudes**

Source: Archive.org

<https://ia801008.us.archive.org/24/items/vinBibleilluscolor2/93A02A5B-7CC4-483C-A978-F08BF97903C3.jpeg>

**Fig 4.7.1 St. Francesca Romana Feeding the Hungry**

Artist: Giovanni Battista Gaulli (1639-1709)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Baciccio-Saint\\_Francesca\\_Romana\\_Giving\\_Alms.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Baciccio-Saint_Francesca_Romana_Giving_Alms.jpg)

**Fig 4.8.1 Dominican Sisters of Mary (Ann Arbor)**

From an article in *Integrated Catholic Life*<sup>TM</sup> by Sarah Reinhard, 2014. A Pinterest button is placed near the image, indicating that the image may be shared for non-commercial use.

<http://www.integratedcatholiclife.org/2014/12/reinhard-sr-joseph-andrew-and-her-orders-new-rosary-album/>